



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

P.O. BOX 60267

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

August 1, 1988

Planning Division
Environmental Analysis Branch

To All Scoping Participants

Nineteen letters were received in response to the Scoping Input Request for the Draft Evaluation Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River - Gulf Outlet, New Lock and Connecting Channels. A scoping document is attached which summarizes the comments received. Copies of the letters are available upon request.

When the draft EIS is filed with the Environmental Protection Agency, you will receive either a copy of the EIS or a Notice of Availability informing you how to obtain copies or have access to them. You will also be notified of the comment period and of the date and location of the public hearings on the EIS.

Thank you for taking the time to comment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R. H. Schroeder, Jr.", is positioned above the typed name.

R. H. Schroeder, Jr.
Acting Chief, Planning Division

Attachment

SCOPING DOCUMENT

DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT MISSISSIPPI RIVER - GULF OUTLET NEW LOCK AND CONNECTING CHANNELS

Introduction

Scoping is a part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process that provides for early agency and public input and identification of major concerns to be addressed in the document. Over 500 Scoping Input Requests were mailed on June 6, 1988, to federal, state, parish, and local agencies and officials, as well as libraries, radio stations, newspapers, businesses, environmental groups, and private individuals. Following a 30-day comment period, nineteen comment letters were received, and copies of these letters are included.

Summary of Scoping Comments

Comment letters were of three types: those with statements applicable to both proposed alternative sites (Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) and Violet site) and those applicable solely to either the IHNC site or the Violet site.

Comments Pertinent To Both Alternative Sites

- City of New Orleans would provide input prior to elimination of any alternative.
- A larger lock (1200 X 150 X 50 ft) needed.
- Consideration of existing and proposed roadways and maintaining traffic at all times (I-10, US 90, at IHNC; LA 46 and LA 39 at Violet site).
- Coordination with State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).
- Complete mitigation for negative project impacts (IHNC site - restore neighborhood to better conditions than before project; Violet site - fully offset environmental losses of habitat, fish and wildlife productivity, and recreation).
- Effects of new channel construction and the proposed project on marsh erosion in the area.
- Conformity of project to state and local water quality management programs and standards.

- Discussion of cost/benefit analyses and analyses of unquantifiable environmental impacts, values and amenities.
- Discussion of impacts of project on groundwater, air quality, wetlands, endangered/threatened species or their habitat, historic preservation and recreation.
- Provide habitat maps and descriptions of associated biological communities and their importance to fish, wildlife, and recreation.
- Determine nature of shipping to be accommodated by the proposed lock as well as the single most economical and environmentally sound choice of navigation route (and hence lock site) to the Gulf rather than maintaining 2 major navigation routes.

IHNC Site

- Consider impacts of increased vehicular traffic, noise and air pollution, litter, ground vibration, roadway deterioration, and possible increased transportation of hazardous materials on historic Bywater neighborhood.

Violet Site

- Assess changes in hydrology due to canal dredging and spoil deposition.
- Assess cumulative impacts of habitat loss and degradation of marine resource production as well as project effects on federally managed fisheries such as shrimp and red drum.
- Consider economic impact to local businesses of division of parish by the lock
- Opposition to this site alternative voiced by the Regional Planning Commission; State of Louisiana House of Representatives, District 103 representative, as well as several private citizens.

Responses to the Scoping Input Request were received from the following:

Federal

National Marine Fisheries Service
 National Park Service
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State

Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

State (cont'd)

Kenneth L. Odinet
State of Louisiana
House of Representatives
District 103

Sherman W. Copelin, Jr.
State of Louisiana
House of Representatives
District 99

Local

Bywater Neighborhood Association
City of New Orleans
Regional Planning Commission of Jefferson, Orleans,
St. Bernard, and St. Tammany Parish

Private

American Commercial Barge Line Company
Val J. Dauterive and Son, Inc.
Mrs. Laurentine Ernst
Oliver A. Houck
Aveta and Junius Louis
New Orleans Steamship Association
Mrs. Val Springer



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P.O. BOX 60267

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

June 6, 1988

Planning Division
Environmental Analysis Branch

SCOPING INPUT REQUEST

DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
MISSISSIPPI RIVER - GULF OUTLET
NEW LOCK AND CONNECTING CHANNELS
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, is initiating the preparation of a Draft Evaluation Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the above described project. Your input concerning significant issues, impacts, and alternatives to be examined is requested.

BACKGROUND

The existing lock on the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) also known as the Industrial Canal, was put into operation in 1923 (see Figure 1). Initial concern for the replacement of the lock began in the 1950's. The Mississippi River - Gulf Outlet (MRGO) was authorized by PL 84-455 (the River and Harbor Act of 1956), was put into service in July 1963, and was fully completed in June 1968. PL 84-455 also provided, ". . .that when economically justified by obsolescence of the existing Industrial Canal lock or by increased traffic, replacement of the existing lock or an additional lock with suitable connections is hereby approved to be constructed in the vicinity of Meraux, Louisiana, with type, dimensions, and cost estimates to be approved by the Chief of Engineers" Section 186 of PL 94-587 (the Water Resources Development Act of 1976) amended PL 84-455, making the construction of bridge relocations a Federal responsibility (not to exceed a cost of \$71,500,000).

The initial public meeting regarding the replacement of the existing lock was held on February 1, 1960. Varied opinions were

expressed regarding the proposed locations under consideration for the lock. Two public meetings to discuss alternative plans and present the plan tentatively selected were held in late 1972: one in New Orleans on November 29, and the other in Chalmette (St. Bernard Parish) on December 10-11. Both extensive project support and opposition were voiced at these meetings. In 1975, the Chief of Engineers approved a tentative plan to construct a lock in St. Bernard Parish. However, President Carter in April 1977 in his message to Congress concerning the 1978 budget recommended that:

"The project should be modified to eliminate consideration of the new channel location. Further study should be carried out to determine whether repair or replacement is needed of the existing lock at the existing site. If replacement and expansions are deemed necessary, special care should be taken to minimize dislocation and disruption of residents near the site."

Subsequently, a public meeting soliciting community feedback was held on May 2, 1978, by the Board of Commissioners for the Port of New Orleans. Planning for a new lock was suspended in late 1982. Legislative guidance regarding replacement or expansion of the existing lock was included in PL 99-662 (the Water Resources Development Act of 1986). Section 844 of PL 99-662 modified PL 84-455 "to provide that the replacement and expansion of the existing industrial canal lock and connecting channels or the construction of an additional lock and connecting channel shall be in the area of the existing lock or at the Violet site."

ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives under consideration for the project are those described in PL 99-662 as stated above. These include: (a) replacement or expansion of the existing Industrial Canal lock and connecting channels at the existing lock site, (b) construction of an additional lock and connecting channels in the area of the existing lock and (c) construction of an additional lock and connecting channels near Violet in St. Bernard Parish. Alternative lock sizes at the two locations will be compared to the No-Action alternative. The lock sizes would vary from a small shallow draft lock (75' wide x 640' long x 21' deep) to a large deep draft lock (150' wide x 1200' long x 50' deep) with construction times estimated from 5 years to 10 years.

SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES

Significant resources in the project area include those identified by legislative, institutional, or public concerns. A tentative list of significant resources included in the proposed outline of the EIS is attached.

IMPACTS

Impacts of project alternatives can be grouped under the general categories of economic, social, and ecological. On balance, replacement of the lock at either site is expected to generate positive economic impacts. Specific negative impacts at the IHNC site would probably include industrial and residential relocations, job dislocations, temporary changes in traffic patterns, temporary noise and dust problems, and other similar impacts associated with major construction projects. These impacts would be substantially less at the Violet site. Replacement at either site would be expected to generate considerable construction employment and income. There is potential for impacts to historic and prehistoric properties at both sites. Adverse ecological impacts would be significant at the Violet site but minor at the existing site.

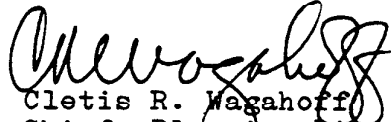
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Responses to this request will provide the basis for a continued public involvement program. Representatives from the Corps of Engineers will coordinate and schedule meetings for the various interests (neighborhood, business, environmental, etc.). Respondents will be invited to attend the meetings or workshops pertaining to their respective interest. These meetings will serve as a forum for organizations and individuals to voice their opinions and concerns. These meetings will also provide additional feedback to be used in reaching a decision on the type and location of lock facility or facilities to be recommended. At the appropriate time in the study process, a formal public meeting will be scheduled to present the tentatively selected plan.

ACTION REQUESTED

Interested individuals, organizations, or representatives of interested agencies are requested to provide specific comments or suggestions regarding alternatives, significant issues (including whether or not an item is significant), and assessment of impacts. Pertinent comments received and issues brought forth

will be addressed in the EIS, thereby eliminating the need for excessive reassessment after public review of the draft report and EIS. Interested parties are requested to provide comments postmarked no later than 30 days from the date of this notice so that their concerns can receive full consideration. Please address all correspondence to Chief, Planning Division. If you would like further information regarding preparation of the EIS, please contact Mr. Bill Wilson, CELMN-PD-RE, U.S. Army Engineer District New Orleans, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267. Mr. Wilson can be contacted at (504) 862-2527.


Cletis R. Wagahoff
Chief, Planning Division

Enclosure